



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

BAY AREA ICE FUGITIVE OPERATIONS TEAM NETS NEARLY 900 ARRESTS SINCE INCEPTION IN MARCH 2003

Almost half have felony convictions ranging from child molestation to manslaughter

SAN FRANCISCO -- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation officers have apprehended 872 immigration fugitives in the Bay Area since March 2003, including more than 400 individuals with prior criminal convictions that ranged from assault, robbery, child molestation, rape, domestic violence and drug trafficking -- to murder.

The Bay Area arrests are part of a national initiative by ICE to locate, arrest, and remove immigration fugitives, particularly those individuals with criminal records. Many of those arrested have been ordered to depart the United States by immigration judges or their criminal convictions constitute violations of immigration law, so they are eligible for immediate removal to their countries of origin.

"Our officers are tracking down those who have willfully ignored a court order and are living illegally in our communities," said Nancy Alcantar, field office director for ICE Detention and Removal in San Francisco. "Many of these fugitives are violent criminals who pose a serious threat to public safety."

Among the immigration absconders arrested by ICE officers here recently was Mario Villaneuva, 49, a Philippine national previously convicted of Lewd and Lascivious Acts with a Minor (his stepson). In addition to his immigration violations, there was a warrant out for Villaneuva's arrest for Failure to Register as a Sex Offender. Officers found Villaneuva in May, hiding in a closet at a San Francisco residence where he was staying. He was sentenced last month to 32 months in prison.

Another fugitive arrested this year by ICE is Guatemalan national, Byron Alfredo Quiroz, a twice-deported aggravated felon who used multiple aliases and at least four alien registration numbers. Quiroz served time in state prisons in Texas and California for First degree Burglary. An authorized search of his computer at the time of his arrest by officers from ICE and the California Department of Justice revealed several images of child pornography.

The fugitive alien initiative is part of a long-term national strategic plan to apprehend and remove the more than 400,000 immigration fugitives and 80,000 criminal aliens who have been ordered to leave the country, but are hiding to avoid deportation.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.